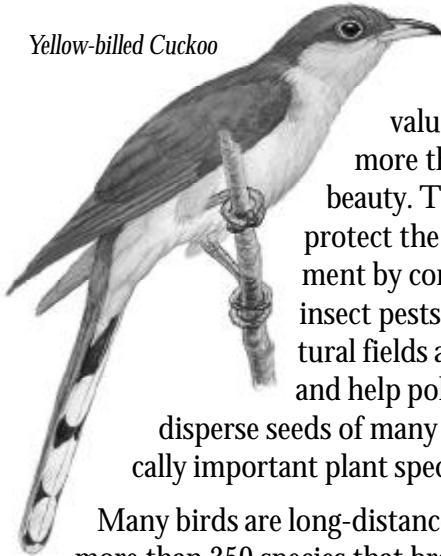


Wildlife Without Borders

Office of International Affairs, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Update, Spring 1999

Yellow-billed Cuckoo



Birds are valued for more than their beauty. They protect the environment by consuming insect pests in agricultural fields and forests, and help pollinate and

disperse seeds of many economically important plant species.

Many birds are long-distance migrants; more than 350 species that breed in the U.S. migrate south of the border for the non-breeding season. However, widespread habitat loss and contamination greatly endanger these bird populations. Migratory behavior complicates effective conservation programs because all efforts must incorporate the multitude of countries and habitats upon which the birds depend.



Bank Swallows

Through *Winged Ambassadors*, the Western Hemisphere Program of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has conserved birds in Latin America and the Caribbean for over 15 years. The initiative helps local people in the region protect key bird habitat, provides training to resource managers in bird conservation techniques, and promotes environmental education programs to inform communities about the plight of birds.

Winged Ambassadors is increasing its efforts to protect birds in the Western Hemisphere. The initiative will expand the "Centers of Excellence for Migratory Birds and Ecosystem Management" in Latin America which offer short courses to train wildlife science, management and enforcement personnel in the principles of migratory bird conservation. In addition, a new reserve manager training program in Central America will emphasize the importance of maintaining bird habitat in the region. Scholarships will be given to Latin American graduate students who are studying resident and migratory birds. Local groups in Argentina will be linked to the North American-wide network of shorebird conservationists, opening an important channel of information about shorebird migration in South America.

The recent tragedy of the Swainson's Hawk underscores the need for international efforts to save birds. After thousands of hawks died in Argentina during the winter of 1995-96, groups from Argentina, Canada, and the U.S. quickly came together to address the problem. Once it was determined that the pesticide monocrotophos caused the huge mortality, *Winged Ambassadors* supplied funding to three Argentine agencies (INTA, SENASA, DFF) to conduct an education campaign to stop its misuse. This year, *Winged Ambassadors* is continuing to support Argentine efforts to monitor pesticide use and conserve wildlife in agroecosystems.

Through its dedication to habitat protection, training and education, *Winged Ambassadors* is working to prevent disasters such as befell the Swainson's Hawk from occurring in the future, and to provide conservation benefits to all birds of the Americas.



Black & White Warblers

Winged Ambassadors conserves birds throughout Latin America and the Caribbean



Belted Kingfishers

©Illustrations from: *A Guide to the Birds of the West Indies*, Princeton University Press



Global View

Perhaps the biggest single source of wildlife conservationists in the world is the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Numbering 8,400 employees, most of whom are wildlife specialists, we have a wide array of expertise. The Office of International Affairs is now tapping into this resource through the Service's new *International Conservation Corps* program.

Open to all Service personnel, the Corps is designed to match special skills with international conservation needs. For example, if a group in Indonesia asks us for guidance on developing an outreach program for a protected area, we can search the database to find a refuge outreach expert with experience in Indonesia. Currently we have 140 people in the Corps database with experience in 97 countries and knowledge of 36 languages. Given this diversity, we can probably find the right person for the job.

Recent Corps assignments include a week-long evaluation of a park guard training program in Chiapas, Mexico; and a series of visits to the Rio Platano Biosphere Reserve in Honduras to assist local organizations in the design of a community environmental education program. At the moment, several people are being considered for assignments to countries in Africa and Central America.

The Corps provides a rich learning experience for Service employees. The opportunity to participate in a conservation program abroad and learn how differing cultural perspectives and resource constraints affect local conservation efforts can really broaden our field of view.

Herb Raffaele
Chief, Office of International Affairs

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Office of International Affairs

Herb Raffaele, Chief

Margie Stump, Secretary to the Chief

Western Hemisphere Branch:

Gilberto Cintron, Branch Chief

Jean Schlegel, Program Assistant

Frank Rivera, IA Specialist

Melida Tajbakhsh, IA Specialist

Ellen Murphy, IA Specialist

Laurie Hunter, IA Specialist

Near East, S. Asia and Africa Branch:

Dave Ferguson, Branch Chief

Fred Bagley, Fish & Wildlife Biologist

Kim McClurg, IA Specialist

Richard Ruggiero, General Biologist

Karl Stromayer, General Biologist

Toni Paris, Secretary

Russia and China Branch:

Steve Kohl, Branch Chief

Peter Ward, IA Specialist

For more information, call: 703/358-1754



Hoary Bat

Bats are our Buddies

Why do they say I'm evil? asks Valentín, a Mexican storybook character. Poor Valentín is a Vampire Bat, one of the world's most detested animals. Vampire Bats are exterminated throughout their range in Latin America. Unfortunately, millions of beneficial bats are killed in the process. Persecution and habitat loss have led to the endangerment of many bat species worldwide.

Bats provide innumerable environmental services, including pollination of commercially valuable crops and consumption of enormous quantities of insect pests. One Little Brown Bat alone can eat up to 600 mosquitoes an hour. And the tequila industry could not exist if bats were no longer there to pollinate agave flowers.

Their bad reputation is undeserved: out of more than 950 species of bats only 3 are vampires, representing approximately 0.3 percent. Ironically, it is human activity that fosters the population expansion of vampire bats. By clearing forests to raise livestock, people have provided vampires with a plentiful source of food.

In Mexico and the U.S., the *Programa para la Conservación de Murciélagos Migratorios* (Program for the Conservation of Migratory Bats) is changing people's attitudes towards bats and enhancing bat conservation. With support from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Bat Conservation International is working with Mexican and U.S. government agencies, universities, and private institutions to protect the millions of bats that migrate between Mexico and the U.S.

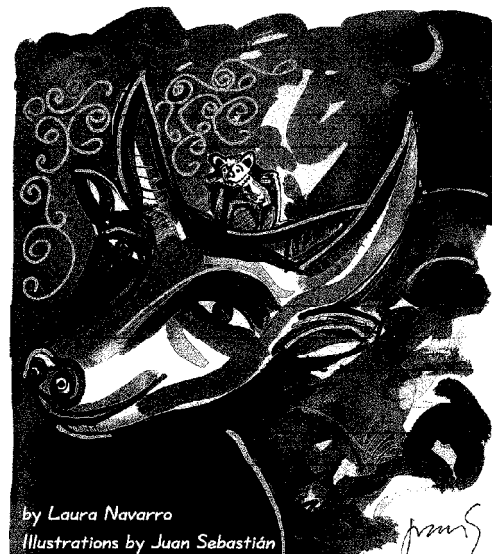
The program objectives are to protect critical bat caves, inform local communities near the caves about the value of bats, and determine the key conservation needs of the

bats. In 4 years there has been dramatic success: the bat population at La Boca Cave near Monterrey, Mexico has increased more than tenfold, from 100,000 to 1,200,000 bats. La Boca is one of the most important bat caves in the Western Hemisphere and soon will be declared a wildlife sanctuary.

The education segment of the program has changed community perceptions about bats. Valentín and Marcelo, protagonists from the children's book series by Laura Navarro and Juan Sebastián, teach kids that bats are an important part of the ecosystem and should not be destroyed indiscriminately. Children are so thrilled with the program, they have formed "Friends of the Bats" clubs to spread the message to others in the community.

The Vampire Bat problem cannot be ignored. Bat Conservation International shows ranchers how to control vampires without killing other bats. People are learning that not all bats are "Dracula" and their continued existence is important to society. Just imagine how bad the mosquitoes would be if your bat friends were gone forever.

Valentín, un Murciélago Especial Valentín, a Special Bat



by Laura Navarro
Illustrations by Juan Sebastián



Marcelo the Bat



Valentín, a Special Bat

East Meets West: US-China Joint Conservation Program

Giant
Panda



Many Americans think mainly of the Giant Panda in association with China,

but this vast country of 3,705,407 sq. mi. is home to an enormous diversity of wildlife. The nation as a whole supports 1,256 bird species, including many rare ones such as the Crested Ibis, Saunder's Gull, and Red-crowned Crane. Yunnan Province alone has approximately 13,000 plant species. In the various aquatic ecosystems, 2,800 fish species swim. But China's wildlife faces great pressure from human activity, ranging from habitat alteration to traditional medicine.

Since 1986, Americans and Chinese have worked together under the *U.S.-China Nature Conservation Protocol* to protect wildlife in both countries. Consisting of a series of personnel and information exchanges (75 to date), the Protocol is jointly administered by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and China's Ministries of Forestry and Agriculture. The purpose of these exchanges is to share knowledge concerning species of mutual interest and to promote the conservation of these species and their habitats.

Past exchanges range from conservation studies of sturgeon and sea turtles to Steppe Polecats and Snow Leopards. Polecats are very similar to our endangered Black-footed Ferret, and Service biologists have greatly improved ferret captive breeding and reintroduction techniques thanks to their 10-year exchange program with the Chinese. The 7-year sturgeon project enabled Chinese scientists to delineate sturgeon habitat in the Yangtze River, using the radio telemetry skills they learned from Service biologists.

During 1999-2000, the following 6 exchanges will occur:

1. River Wetland Conservation. The Chinese will visit the Illinois, Missouri, and Susquehanna Rivers; the Americans will visit the Shuangtai, Luanhe, Dafeng, and Yellow Rivers. This exchange will focus on conserving bird habitat, assessing threats to riverine systems, and increasing public appreciation for wetlands.

2. CITES Enforcement Training The Chinese will visit the U.S. to learn how we enforce CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) and train our agents. The Americans will conduct a training workshop in China and visit the CITES branch office in Shanghai.

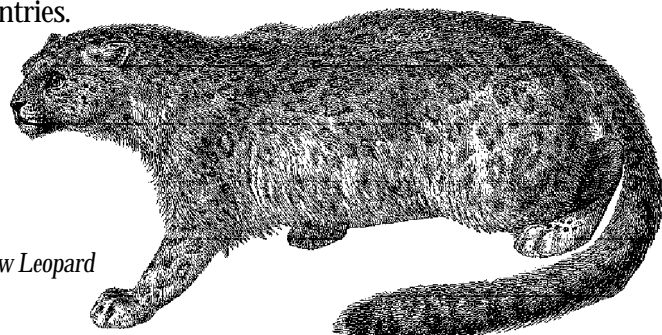
3. Argali Sheep Studies. Americans will go to China's Xinjiang Province to learn about sheep survey methods and data analysis, and the Chinese will come to the western U.S. to learn how we monitor sheep populations.

4. Red-crowned Crane Research. American and Chinese biologists will conduct crane field studies in China's Heilongjiang Province. The Chinese will receive training in ecological economics and wetland conservation at Utah's Brigham Young University.

5. Freshwater Fish Management. Focusing on sturgeon conservation techniques, the Americans will visit the Yangtze and Amur Rivers and the Chinese will visit a series of Service fisheries centers in the southeast U.S.

6. Use of GIS for Aquatic Habitat Conservation. The Americans and Chinese will exchange information on how Geographic Information Systems are used to improve management of fisheries and aquatic ecosystems in both countries.

Snow Leopard



Pakistan's Rich Biodiversity

From the summit of the Himalayas to the shore of the Arabian Sea, Pakistan's ecosystems support a wealth of biological diversity. The climatic extremes, with some of the world's hottest desert lowlands and coldest mountain peaks, create a wide range of habitats. Both the smallest living mammal, the Mediterranean Pygmy Shrew, and the largest, the Blue Whale, can be found in Pakistan, and the country is home to the Indus flyway which is the fourth most globally important bird migration route.

Threats abound to the well being of Pakistan's wildlife. A human population growth rate over 3%, limited arable land, air and water pollution, erosion, deforestation, and desertification mean that suitable habitat is in short supply. Many species are endangered and some, such as the Swamp Deer and Tiger, are now extinct in Pakistan.

Pakistan is very concerned about protecting the environment and preventing further extinctions. The *National Conservation Strategy* (1992) outlines a comprehensive conservation agenda. Effective implementation, however, is hampered by a lack of trained resource personnel and basic information on the country's natural heritage. In order to assist conservation efforts, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has been involved in Pakistan since 1977. The Service supports training programs for natural resource managers, biodiversity studies, and public outreach. Project highlights include:

Crane Conservation. Pakistan is on the migratory route of the endangered Siberian Crane. Common and Demoiselle Cranes are caught by hunters during the birds' migration through Pakistan. Fear that hunting also could impact the few remaining Siberian Cranes led the Service to enlist Dr. Steven Landfried's help in developing a public education program on crane conservation. As a result of this work, Pakistan banned Siberian Crane hunting and restricted hunting of the other cranes.

Wildlife Clubs. The Service and the University of Maine have helped the Government of Pakistan develop a conservation education program designed to engage the nation's youth. Club members are involved in nature study, wildlife protection, tree planting campaigns, and public outreach programs. Dozens of these clubs are distributed throughout the country, promoting environmental awareness among young people.

Biodiversity of Pakistan. This recent publication is the outcome of an international symposium held at the Pakistan Museum of Natural History in collaboration with the Florida Museum of Natural History and the Service. The book is an excellent resource for the latest information on the biodiversity of Pakistan and is an important tool for conservation in the country.

"Our Elders are Our Books"

The proverb, "Nossos velhos são nossos livros" (Our elders are our books), expresses the importance of oral traditions for many indigenous tribes in Brazil.

The diverse Tremembé villages of northern Brazil have a long history of living close to the land with minimal influence from outside sources. Recent expansion of

settlers into the region has convinced the Tremembé that their survival is dependant upon their ability to become more unified and knowledgeable about their own cultural legacy. Realizing that a building could help bring about this cohesion, the Tremembé asked the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to finance a special center where people could meet and learn about their environment and traditions.

Using the Service's small donation for construction materials, the Tremembé in Almofala and Varjota communally built two meeting centers. These centers house permanent natural history exhibits and function as a school for children, as well as a place for adults to gather and pass on their oral traditions. Important political and social decisions are made in the centers which affect the future of these communities and the natural environment.



Tremembé community center at Varjota in northern Brazil.



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